

## The Timing & Tears of God

### I. Slide1 **Announcements:**

- A. Slide2-5b Shane: YAMS. JC Fest. VBS. Sponsorships. Middle School Camp.
- B. Slide6 Children at Risk - read Bulletin.
- C. Slide7 Strike Out Slavery - read. Buy online.
- D. Slide8 Church Baptism - Sun Aug.18 @ CCBC. *Grab flyer for required baptism class.*
- E. Slide9 This Wed Nite - 6:30pm dinner. *VBS Fun.* All Welcome.
- F. Slide10 Interview w/Mike - Why **transition** now? Can you tell us about **1 believer** in the Hani region? What do you see as the **most pressing need**?
- G. Prayer: *Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.* Deliver us from routine worship, *business as usual.* Let our worship be *ever new, ever fresh, & forever more.*

### II. Slide11 **INTRO: The Timing & Tears of God**

- A. Of the **greatest cultural divides** in today's world is the different ways in which we do **funerals**. I've seen them in many countries...most recently with Andrew in **Kathmandu**.
  - 1. Slide12 We visited **The Pashupati** Temple's open Crematorium.
  - 2. Dates back centuries (400bc). *It is believed that a Hindu cremated here would be reborn as a Human in his next birth.*
  - 3. The entire process takes 3 to 4 hours, **and** the ashes join the river **Bagmati**, which eventually leads to the **Ganges** river in India. [usually just 3-5 hours after death]
    - a) It's all part of the strange business of **being human** that when we are with *very sad people* **their sadness infects us** even if we don't share their particular grief.
    - b) Slide13 Psychologists point out that, *we all carry deep griefs of one sort or another, and these come to the surface when we are with others who have more immediate reason for sorrow.*

- B. **Death**, the last thing we want to talk about. It makes us uncomfortable, awkward, painful, so emotional. We've medically learned to **postpone** it, even **tame** its violence, **but** death is still there waiting for us. **Death always waits.**
1. It comes after Christian Relief Workers persecuted for their faith. It comes after Family & Friends. It comes after Celebrities (we await to hear why **Tyler Skaggs**, the Angels Pitcher in his prime, 27 yrs old, died in his hotel room. **Foul play ruled out. Suicide ruled out. We await the autopsy.**)
  2. None of us are **immune** from **difficulties** in this life, or **tragedy, illness** or death.

### III. Slide14a **THE TIMING OF GOD (1-16)**

- A. This is Jesus **7th & last & most spectacular sign** in the gospel of John.
1. It is climatic because it illustrates beyond doubt **Jesus' power to give life & triumph over death.**
- B. Slide14b Jesus **gives life only by giving His life.**
1. The **raising** of Lazarus leads directly to the **death** of Jesus (see vs.53)
  2. It is in this sense that the illness/death of Lazarus is **for the glory of God** (4).
    - a) Slide14c Jonathan Edwards said, The object of all things is **God's glory**, & when God gets His glory, God's people get their joy.
  3. **Wait go back. Who gets the glory?** (note: both Father & Son). **What are they receiving glory through?** (Lazarus' death)
    - a) I don't believe that God only desires to receive **glory** through this one man's death. *Can we at least ask...God how will You receive glory in my life today? In my illness today. And in my death tomorrow?*
  4. **How can I bring Glory to God?** Jesus Jn.17:4, *I brought glory to You here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.* Jesus honored God by *fulfilling his purpose* on earth. **We honor God the same way. When anything in creation fulfills its purpose, it brings glory to God. Birds** bring glory to God by flying, chirping, nesting, and doing other bird-like activities that God intended. Even the lowly **ant** brings glory to God when it fulfills the purpose it was created for. God made **ants** to be **ants**, and he made **you** to be **you**. St. Irenaeus said, *The glory of God is a human being fully alive!*

- C. **The Setting:** In a *sleepy little hamlet* named **Bethany** 2 miles outside of Jerusalem, where Jesus loved to get R&R at his friends house: *Mary, Martha, & their brother Lazarus*.
1. It was **His surrogate home** for Him in the south.
  2. **Note who's village it was** (*the village of Mary*, vs.2) [next ch tells her anointing story]
  3. **Note who He loved** (Martha, vs.5) [Maybe u relate more to being a **Martha**]
- D. (6) **God waits** - He received *the emergency 9-1-1 come quickly appeal*, from best friends, **so** he stayed at **Extended Stay** 2 more days. (didn't mention it to his disciples. didn't make prep to go. didn't send a message back *we're on our way*. He just stayed. **And** Mary/Martha watched their brother die) **Was he too busy? Was He attending to other matters of greater importance? No!**
1. **In times of crisis** its essential we understand some important facts about **time & perspective**.
  2. Because if you've been a Christian any amount of time you know, w/o a shadow of a doubt **God is always late!**...according to our standards :)
    - a) **Slide14d Regarding Time:** Our Lord is **never** late. He often delays His response, **but is never** late. His watch is merely set to a different timetable, calibrated to matters of **eternal** rather than *temporal* consequence.<sup>1</sup> [God's **delays** are not His **denials**]
    - b) **Slide14e Regarding Perspective:** We can adopt either a **human** or a **divine** outlook.
      - (1) **Human perspective** focuses on the **urgent & blurs the important**.
      - (2) **Divine perspective** factors **eternity** into the mysterious equations of life
- E. **God's timing** - God was orchestrating an incredible moment & needed to *set the stage*.
1. And since the **corpse** must be **center stage** before this drama can begin, **Jesus must wait** until Lazarus dies before He can make His entrance. **But** Mary & Martha *can't see backstage* in heaven.
    - a) All they can see is an expansive, **black curtain** drawn across their lives. They sit at home, despondent, as in an **empty theater**.

#### IV. Slide15 **THE TEARS OF GOD (17-44)**

<sup>1</sup> Chuck Swindoll; John; pg.60

- A. Christ's arrival sparks some reactions in Mary & Martha. We note some **similarities** & some **contrasts**.
- B. In vs.20 we see the **contrasts**: *Martha* ran to meet; *Mary* sat in the house.
1. Every family seems to have an **activist** & a **contemplative**.
    - a) The **Activist** has to **do** something. *He's coming, I'll run to him. I'll do all the house work, you just sit there Mary.*
    - b) The **Contemplative** says, *I'll just sit here & pray, ponder, think, cry, study, journal, I'll just feel this for awhile,* says **Mary**.
  2. **Important**: *They grieve & mourn differently...*& that's perfectly ok by **Jesus**. **He meets them right where their personality takes them.**
- C. In verse 21 & 32 we see the **similarity** of their initial greetings.
1. Although their **words** are the same, their **posture** is not.
  2. **Martha** runs to him, active & erect. **Mary** falls at His feet, passive & prostrate. **Martha** said them to His face. **Mary** cried them at His feet.
    - a) Here's the noted difference...**Martha** needed **Intellectual** propping up. **Mary** needed **emotional** support.
    - b) **Martha** needed to know **that Jesus was in control**.
    - c) **Mary** needed to know **that Jesus cared**.
  3. **How did Jesus handle both of these friends?**
    - a) He met each sister where she was, **whether standing or prostrate**; **whether** needing **intellectual or emotional** support.
    - b) **One evoked theological truths & promises**; the other evoked **tears**.
  4. **When my mother** died when I was 21, & still had 2 younger sisters at home, I approached Jesus like **Martha**, desiring **intellectual** answers, **Why???**
  5. **When my father** died I just needed **emotional** support from Jesus like **Mary**.
    - a) **God is in control & He cares**.
- D. Many Christians often feel that **bringing glory to God** means putting on a happy face no matter what is happening in our lives.

1. If we're **sad, angry, confused, or hurting**, we somehow feel that if we don't have these difficult feelings wrapped up neatly *in a moments time*, we've **betrayed** the faith & put a **blot** on our testimony to Jesus.
2. But, **not once** did Jesus tell anyone, *Stop crying! or How dare u question Me.*
3. When you **grieve**, when you're **confused**, even when you're **angry**, don't try to *hide your feelings* from God & pretend everything's alright.

E. **Slide16** We also must learn to take our **if's** to Jesus (21)

1. How broad the blame we place on **if's** little shoulders.
  - a) **Slide17a** *If only* we hadn't moved here. *If only* I hadn't married him/her. *If only* I hadn't listen to her/him. *If only* we hadn't invested in that Ponzi scheme.
  - b) *If only* he hadn't stepped out in front of that car. *If only* she passed that test. *If only* they left an hour later. *What are your if only's?* [Take em to Jesus like Mary/Martha did]
  - c) We all know the sickening sense of wanting to *turn the clock back*. That's what movies are made, like *Back to the Future* [where, **if** you could change something in the previous generation, it will mean **now** everything in the present, and the future can be different] (time machine from modified DeLorean. Marty, Doc, Lorraine & George, Biff. Marty accidentally prevented his parents from meeting by saving George (dad) from an oncoming car, he must find a way to introduce George to Lorraine (mom) or he will be erased from existence)
2. **Slide17b** Jesus deal with Martha's **if only** statement. He explains, instead of looking at the **past**, he invites her to look to the **future**. **Then**, having look to the **future**, He asked her to imagine that the **future** is suddenly brought **forwards** into the **present**.
  - a) He points her to the **future**. *Your brother will rise again*. Martha believes this, but her flat response in vs.24 shows that it **isn't** at the moment...**very comforting**. [but she wasn't prepared for Jesus's response]
  - b) The **future** has burst into the **present**. The Resurrection has come forward from *the end of time* into *the middle of time*. *I am the resurrection & the life...not I will be...*

3. Resurrection **isn't** just a doctrine. **It isn't** just a future fact. **It's** a person, and *here He is standing in front of Martha, teasing her to make the huge jump of trust and hope.*
  4. **Slide17c** He is challenging her, urging her, to exchange her **if only** for an **if Jesus**.
  5. **If Jesus** is who she is coming to believe He is. **If Jesus** is the Messiah, the Promise One, the One who was to come into the world. **If Jesus** is God's own Son. **If Jesus** is *resurrection-in-person, life-come-to-life*. Wright
    - a) The story breaks off at this point, keeping us in suspense, **while Martha goes to get her sister**. Maybe it's God giving us space to think the same questions thru ourselves?
- F. **Slide18a** What an incredible Savior. Weeping not just **for** us in our **sin**, but **with** us in our suffering.
1. So strange, One with **absolute power** would surrender to so small an army as **tears? But He does!**<sup>2</sup> [*He has borne our griefs & carried our sorrows.* Is.53:4]
    - a) Ken Gire, *And, for a beautifully tender moment, we are given the privilege to glimpse one of the most provocative embraces between **deity & humanity**.*
  2. Thank you Jesus, for giving **dignity** to our grief & **freedom** to our emotions.
  3. Thank you Jesus, for the **beautiful tribute** that tears are to the dead, telling them they were **loved & will be missed**.
  4. Thank you Jesus, you know what it's like to **lose someone you love**.
  5. Thank you Jesus, you know **how I feel**.
  6. Thank you Jesus, you've enabled me to **weep with those who weep**.
    - a) *Help me to feel the **pain** they feel, the **uncertainty**, the **fear**, the **heaviness**, the **regret**, the **despondency**.*
    - b) *Help me to share with those who cry out, **Lord, if You had been there... & help them to see that You were there, weeping with them.***

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<sup>2</sup> Ken Gire; Incredible Moments with the Savior; pg.96.



7. Oh Lord, help us to put away our *high-and-dry pictures of who You are and replace them with pictures in which You cry with the world's crying...that's when we discover what the word God really means.* N.T. Wright

G. Contrast: *Weep* (33) the wailing of mourners, *to Jesus wept* (35) implies the silent tears of sympathy.

1. But note vs.33,38 **He was deeply moved. lit. He was enraged in spirit & troubled Himself.**

a) As if to say...*I hate death. I hate what sin has done to My creation.*

*I hate the distress to mankind. I hate to watch my children grieve so intensely.*

2. Oh what grief was stirred within Jesus' heart, **by the tears of Mary & the crowds tears** (33).

H. (41,42) He **doesn't** pray that he will now have the **power** to raise Lazarus. He **thanks** the Father that **He has heard** Him. [**Heard him?** Yes, prob the 2 day time of *waiting*. Jesus, exploring the Fathers will in that intimacy & union which He had with Him]

I. (43) **Lazarus come out** - Augustine, *They had to say his name otherwise He would have emptied the graveyard.*

J. **LESSONS LEARNED:**

K. **Slide18b** When **delay** occurs, God has a **better time** & a **better way**.

L. When **death** occurs, God has a **better plan** & a **better purpose**.

M. It revealed Jesus is who He said He was...**the Resurrection & the life.** **But** it revealed something else. *The Timing & Tears of God.*

1. **Now which do you say is more incredible? A man who raises the dead...or a God who weeps?** What do you find more amazing? The **power** of Jesus or the **emotions** of Jesus?